**Ephesians 1:15-23**

**Introduction:**

I would like you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1 verse 5. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse number 5. And as you’re turning there I would like thank the elders and everyone here for allowing the others and me to speak this evening. I know I speak for everyone when I say we’re truly honored to be given this moment to preach God’s Word to you all. And though in the back of our minds we know you have pen and paper in hand—judging every word that comes out of our mouths, we hope that even given the academic nature of things that this would still be edifying to everyone here.

Well, if you’re in Ephesians 1, I’d ask that you stand—if you’re able—out of respect the reading of God’s Word. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse number 15. We’ll be reading until verse 23.

**Prayer**

Paul is most likely writing this letter to the Ephesians while under house arrest in Rome. A reminder of the painful beginnings where Christ chose to lay the foundation of His Church. And while writing this letter he gives them a small glimpse—a window into his prayer life. If we look in verses 15 and 16 Paul says, “For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”

* + Why is Paul so thankful for these Christians and why is he so eager to pray for them? He says that he ceases not to give thanks for them. Why such eagerness? The answer is a very simple one: their faith and their love.
  + There are many things to be thankful for in a church, but how often is it faith and love? We many times think of good music, lively small groups, extravagant meetings, but what are all of those things and what is a church if there is no faith in Jesus and love towards the saints.
  + It is this foundational quality to any good church that moves Paul to offer this prayer for the church in Ephesus.
* **And today I would like to focus in on 3 things** we see in this passage. **The Prayer for the Church**, **the Power for the Church**, and **the Purpose for the Church**.
* I would like for us to look first at the “**Prayer for the Church**.” The “Prayer for the Church.”
* The first thing that Paul prays is seen in verse 17 were Paul prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. What an amazing thing to have and experience more and more each day—a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. But how does one attain this sort of wisdom and knowledge? It can’t be done by mere study. It can’t be simply learned from all the books of the world. You see Paul prays that God would GIVE the church this spirit of wisdom and knowledge of Himself. It can only be given. Without the working of the Holy Spirit there is no wisdom or knowledge of God. Paul begins his prayer with this truth because it is so foundational. Without the power of God, none of these would be attainable. It was the work of the Holy Spirit when you came to know God, and it will be the work of the Holy Spirit as you come to know God more.
  + What else does Paul pray this church would experience? Look again with me in verse 18. “Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.” The HOPE to which he has called you. What is this hope? If you were to look down a few verses to chapter 2 verse 12 you would see that those who do not believe have no hope and are without God in this world. One group has astounding hope. The other has no hope. One group lives in Christ until they pass into glory. The other feeds their bodies until that stops working and they pass into judgment. Every one of us will face death at one point. To those who have believed all the hope of Heaven is given to you. Paul prays that this church would have that truth taught to them by the Holy Spirit of God. He prays that their hearts would be enlightened. This is the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit where He causes our minds to receive the things of God. It would change the way we live our Christian lives if we understood this.
  + The third thing Paul prays in the second half of verse 18 is that by the power of the Holy Spirit they would know what the riches of God’s glorious inheritance in the saints are. Paul is now directing them not to what God has given them but that God has chosen them to be His inheritance. If we were to look once again down to chapter 2 verse 12 it says, “Remember that you were at that time (speaking of the Old Covenant) separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise.” At one point they were separated from God’s people—the people whom God made His own, but what a wonderful thing it is to say that by faith we are the glorious inheritance of God. To say with Moses, “The Lord’s portion is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance.” Not in any way to think highly of ourselves but it should bring us joy to know that God considers His people a glorious inheritance.
  + Still as we’re considering Paul’s prayer for the church, the fourth thing that Paul prays this church would know by the power of the Holy Spirit is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe. Look at the language Paul uses to express this power. Immeasurable greatness of His power! What is this power? This is that same power that though we being dead were made alive in Christ. The Holy Spirit who by His power enlightens our minds to grasp the things of God is that same Spirit whose power first birthed us into new life in Christ.
* In this prayer for the church everything seems to point to and lead up to this power in the church. And I would like us now to look at this “**Power for the Church**.”
  + Look again at verse 19. “and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” The same power that worked in you to believe the Gospel—the same power that works in you now to understand more and more the truths of God and to know God in a greater and mightier way is that same power of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him above every rule, authority, power, dominion, and named that is named.
  + How often do we as the Church feel so weak? In this world that seems to become more and more secular every day, it’s tempting for us to feel discouraged, forgotten, and sometimes on the verge of disappearing. Have you felt that way before? When your friends or family belittle what you understand to be the greatest truth in the universe, do you feel afraid and sometimes powerless?
  + If you’re a believer here today, that power is in you and in the Church. That shouldn’t make you arrogant. That shouldn’t make you feel powerful, instead it should comfort you that though you are weak and your words powerless in themselves, the same power that converted your soul is still at work converting the souls of sinners. That great power of God—the immeasurable greatness of God’s power that raised Christ from the dead—has seated Him above all things, and though you at times feel weak, remember that Christ is strong and He is on His throne.
* **This brings us now to the Purpose for the Church**. We’ve looked at Paul’s prayer for the church, we’ve seen that power for the church. Now let us consider the “Purpose for the Church.”
  + Look with me at verses 22 and 23, “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” The power that translated us from darkness to light is the power that raised Jesus to all authority. **But to what end**? We often think in very simple terms: now on earth—forever in Heaven. Or: Jesus is glorified and God’s glory is of supreme importance. That’s true. All things are done ultimately for the glory of God. **But look at these words in verse 22**, “and gave Him as head over all things to the church.” Not only does the exaltation of Christ bring all glory and praise to God, but it is also to the benefit of the church. As Christ is exalted over all authority and power, the church does no watch from a distance along with the rest of creation. Rather, as Christ is the head and the Church is His body, Christ is given to the Church and His rule is to the benefit of the Church.
  + Though at times you may look around at all the controversies surrounding the Christian faith, and all the disbelief, do not think to yourself that any portion of it is purposeless. Christ is head of all things and given to church—for the benefit of the church.
  + As we close, I want you to notice the escalation we see in this passage. It starts off so small. Church in Ephesus, I’ve heard of your faith in the Lord and your love towards all the saints. I pray that you would know your God more. I pray that you would know more and more the hope that you have in your calling that was before the foundation of the world and the blessedness to be a part of God’s inheritance and the great power of God that is towards you—the very power that raised Jesus from the dead and placed Him above every rule, above every authority, power, dominion, and name that is named, and all things in this age and the age to come, and all of this is to the benefit of the Church His body to whom He is given. It is no small thing what happens in the Church. Though this week as you get on your phone or computer or talk to those around you, you may be tempted to lose hope—even a little. But what does Paul pray for this church? And how can we pray for each other? That the Holy Spirit would enlighten our hearts to know the hope to which God has called us. Pray that we as a church would trust in God’s power and trust that under the authority of Christ, all things have a purpose for the benefit of God’s people.

Would you join me in prayer?